



WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

AND RESEARCH NOTES

No.	AUTHOR: W. Adam Phelps, Waterfowl Research Biologist	DATE 9/10/2009
	TITLE: 2009 Light Goose Conservation Order in Indiana	

Abstract: *The light goose conservation order was available statewide in Indiana from 16 February to 31 March 2009. All participants were required by state law to obtain a free permit. An estimated 134 participants pursued light geese for a total of 564 hunter-days in Indiana from 16 February to 31 March 2009, harvesting an estimated 78 light geese. Light goose harvest in Indiana during the 2009 conservation order decreased by 50% from the 2008 conservation order period. The most common comments from participants were not knowing where to hunt and having limited opportunity on light geese.*

Regulations

The light goose conservation order was available statewide in Indiana to residents and non-residents from 16 February to 31 March 2009. Shooting hours were from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. There were no daily bag or possession limits. Shotguns capable of holding more than three shells and electronic calling devices were legal. All participants were subject to the same regulations applied during the regular waterfowl season (i.e., Indiana hunting license, Indiana waterfowl stamp privilege), except that a Federal duck stamp and registration with the Harvest Information Program were not required. In addition to licensing requirements, participants were required to obtain a free permit with an attached pre-addressed, postage paid survey card.

Methods

All participants were required by state law to obtain a free permit. Attached to each permit was a pre-addressed, postage paid survey card to be completed and mailed after the close of the conservation order. Those who did not return their survey card were mailed a second, reminder survey card. No attempt was made to solicit non-respondents after the second survey card was sent.

Results

A total of 1,980 individuals registered to participate in the conservation order (compared to 782 in 2008) and 709 survey cards were returned (35.8% response rate), of which 48 respondents indicated they participated in the order. An estimated 134 participants pursued light geese for a total of 564 hunter-days in Indiana from 16 February to 31 March 2009 and harvested an estimated 78 light geese. An estimated 8 participants used electronic calls, with an estimated 28 using unplugged shotguns. An estimated 31 participants pursued geese one-half hour after sunset, harvesting an estimated 20 light geese during that time. Efforts to take light geese occurred in 21 known counties; harvest occurred in only four (Table 1).

Discussion

Light goose harvest in Indiana during the 2009 conservation order decreased for the second year in a row, to a record low reported harvest. However, we issued a record high number of permits,

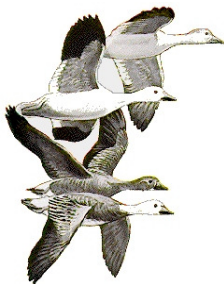
probably due to the online permitting process that we began this year (in conjunction with the experimental Late Canada Goose Zone season). The most common comments from participants were not knowing where to hunt and having limited opportunity on light geese. This year, 71% of harvest occurred in Posey County, in the southwest tip of Indiana, with low harvest levels occurring in northwest Indiana as well. The single goose shot in Decatur County is very unusual. Southwest Indiana is perennially the highest harvest area during the conservation order. This annual variation in effort and harvest (location and level) likely reflects the spotty year-to-year variation in distribution of light geese in Indiana.

The Conservation Order was reduced in length this year to allow for the experimental Late Canada Goose Zone Season. However, in 2010, we will open the Conservation Order statewide on 1 February, except for the Late Canada Goose Zone, where the Conservation Order will become available as of 16 February (after the Canada goose season closes).

Table 1. Reported^a harvest of light geese by county during the snow goose conservation order in Indiana, 2009.

County	16 – 23 Feb	24 Feb – 9 Mar	10 – 31 Mar	Total
Decatur	0	0	1	1
Jasper	0	0	2	2
Marshall	0	0	2	2
Posey	20	3	0	23
Total	20	3	5	28

^a Reflects distribution of reported (not estimated) harvest of light geese.



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